Annex to identical letters dated 20 June 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the thirty-sixth round of the Geneva international discussions

The thirty-sixth round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 15 June 2016. The participants in the discussions took part, in their individual capacity, in two working groups, the first focusing on security and stability in the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, and the other on issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of origin. The discussions were co-chaired by representatives of the European Union, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, as well as representatives of the Russian occupation regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, took part in the discussions.

Within both working groups, the participants from Georgia raised the issue of the murder committed on 19 May in the village of Khurcha. The Georgian side provided additional information about the murder and demanded the immediate detention of the accused. Georgia's position was unanimously supported by the Co-Chairs and other participants. Unfortunately, the representatives of the occupation regime failed to provide any meaningful information on the case. The participants expressed their hope that the next meeting of the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali on 6 July would provide more clarity on the case.

Within the first working group, the participants from Georgia reviewed the grave security situation in the occupied regions, particularly the ongoing militarization, illegal military drills and the de facto annexation process of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by the Russian Federation. Against this background, the Georgian side called upon the Russian Federation to fulfil the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement and to confirm the non-use of force commitment, in reciprocity for the legally binding pledge on the non-use of force, which was taken unilaterally by Georgia several times. The commitment has to be ensured by international security arrangements in the occupied regions.

Within both working groups, the Georgian side paid special attention to the continued installation of razor-wire fences, so-called "border" signs and other artificial barriers along the occupation line, which grossly violates the fundamental rights of the local population. A principled discussion was held on the detentions and kidnappings of Georgian citizens on the grounds of so-called "illegal border crossing". The participants from Georgia demanded guarantees for free and safe movement across the occupation line, the urgent need for which was proved by the murder committed by the so-called "border guards" near the occupation line.

Within the second working group, the grave human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories was reviewed. A long discussion was held on the

prohibition of native-language education for ethnic Georgians in the Gali district. The Georgian side stressed the need for effective measures to resolve the issue prior to the new academic year.

The participants from Georgia talked extensively about the importance of the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The Russian Federation, as is its custom, politicized the issue, upon the pretext of the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees. Notably, the Co-Chairs and the US representatives underlined the necessity of substantial discussion on the return of internally displaced persons.

Within the first working group, the participants discussed all agenda items, while the representatives of the Russian Federation and the occupation regimes walked out of the second working group during the discussion on the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. This fact once again underlines their non-constructive approach towards human rights and humanitarian problems, as well as towards the principles of negotiations in general.

An informational session on communication and transparency measures was held on 13 June.

The next round of the Geneva international discussions will be held on 4 and 5 October 2016.